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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Well, Hurricane Floyd bore down on New England Thursday night and dumped a ton of rain in our local area. By the time it got to us, the hurricane had been downgraded to a tropical storm. Regardless, it wasn’t a night to go out and see the sights!

We were "late" getting our pool closed, but we did manage to get it closed up and covered the night before. We anticipated a lot of "stuff" getting blown around and likely ending up in the pool. We thought it prudent to prefer cleaning any debris off of the cover than having to worry about it next spring! I’m not looking forward to seeing what lies in wait for us in the yard!

I don’t know how many of you have been through a hurricane, but it’s definitely something I don’t relish having to worry about too often. We’ve been fortunate here in the northeast the past couple of decades. I remember going through at least one powerful storm when I was much younger. It was exciting for me as a youngster, but now it’s not so much fun. Hopefully, our readers on the east coast didn’t have to experience too many problems due to Floyd! I wonder how Ralph managed to weather the storm...

Well, enough excitement for one week. Right now I have to "convince" the dogs that they really don’t want to go out in this mess for their evening romp around the yard!

Until next time...

MGC 99 Announcement

From: "Bengy Collins" <collins@bulli.com>

Hello all,

In the rules of the MagiC Game Contest, anyone who wanted to enter the contest must have registered by September 15th, 1999.

However, we did not plan on Atari.org going down, but because it has we have cancelled this registration date as it is unfair to many. We will announce a new entry deadline later this month.

(This change came when a programmer who wanted to enter the contest informed me that the registration form on the contest pages does not work - a result of the gem.atari.org server being offline.)

Bengy Collins collins@bulli.com

Atari Meeting in Portland, Oregon USA

From: Benjamin Smith <bensmith@user2.teleport.com>

If you have an Atari and live in Portland, Oregon. U.S.A. or vicinity, you are cordially invited to attend a Meeting of the Portland Atari Club. You don't have to be a member to attend. We meet the 2nd Tuesday of each Month. Our Next meeting will be Tuesday, September 14th, 7 pm at the Pizza Baron at 2604 S.E 122nd Avenue in Portland, Oregon. Get together with other Atarians. Make friends, meet new people, maybe find an old friend. Eat Pizza, drink Pop & Beer in a decorative atmosphere. Bring your family to a family friendly place. For more info try:

http://pac.pdxweb.net
e-mail: atari@benjamin.net
For more information or directions, please call our Vice President Ben Smith at (503)256-9974 See you there!

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
jmirando@portone.com

Hid ho friends and neighbors. I've made a decision that most of you out there are probably going to appreciate. I'm not going to mention using a PC this time around. Don't ask me why. Just don't ask. Most of you with Windows experience will have a rough idea of why.

So, now that that's out of the way, let's talk about something else. How about free email accounts through Atari-Users.Net? Have you taken a look yet? It's a very usable system and, like I said before... IT'S FREE!

I keep meaning to get around to trying out that overlay or whatever it is that lets you use ASH's I-Connect with StinG/StiK clients, but I simply don't have the time. I know, I know, I'll get no sympathy from you because you're in pretty much the same boat. But then again, I'm not really looking for sympathy, just explaining it. As a matter of fact, I have conversed less and less with one of my very good friends in the past year or so. We've both watched our free time diminish, and we both understand that the lack of communication isn't a sign of anything other than the fact that we're both busier than all get-out. On the upside, it's nice to get email from someone who you know is just as busy as you are.

Things have gotten so frantic these days that I often wonder if computers have made it easier, or if they have actually helped cause it.

Should YOU somehow find the time to check it out, please email us and

let us know what you think.

Well, let’s get on with all the news, hints, tips, and info to be found on the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Hallvard Tangeraas posts:

As most of us know, the "Atari.org" site has had problems for a very long time. Fortunately, things have started working again, but there are still problems, and although having mailed them I haven’t had any response, so perhaps someone reading this can tell me/us what the current status is..."

Nicholas Bales tells Hallvard:

"Rich Davies has written down basically what’s up with the server.

http://www.atari.org/news/index.php3?id=article&number=220

It seems they have had problems with aging hardware and power surges.

The server died and all the disks blew up, so they had to reinstall everything by hand on backup hardware. They are still in need of a new server, but don’t have the finances to get one."

Mike Robillard asks for info and opinions about printers:

"I’m planning on buying a new printer for my FALCON.I would appreciate any suggestions on what brands I should consider and the ones I should avoid."

Daniel Dreibelbis tells Mike:

"I just purchased an Epson PhotoStylus for both my Falcon and my Quadra, and I must say I am VERY impressed with the results I’m getting from it. You’ll have to get NVDI 5 to make full use of an Epson, but it’ll be worth it.

Note - I’d suggest getting hold of something like the 740 or 740i if you have more than one system at home, as it uses parallel, Apple serial and USB. (this will be important if you own an iMac or want to get the USB-equipped Centek or Milan 500).

You might also want to check out http://www.epson.com, as the Company makes refurbs available from time to time at good prices. If you only want to use it with the Falcon, you could go for a 440 or 640 for excellent results."

Claes Holmerup adds:

"If you’re planning on using it with Cubase Audio, get a laser printer that’s HP laserjet compatible and there won’t be any problems. You need a printer that can print in DOS, so don’t get the cheaper Windows-printers as they won’t work.

Many inkjets use special commands to enable the graphics, which means you

have to get special drivers for them. If you use "normal" programs, you can probably use NVDI-drivers and use some inkjets fully, but NVDI doesn't work with Cubase (other than the screen speedup) - so don't count on getting the best performance out of a new inkjet - if it works at all..."

James Smith asks a hard drive question:

"I have just been to a local Computer Show and picked up a Seagate Barracuda 4.1 gig hd real cheap.

When I got home and opened the box I got a couple of surprises:

1. The drive is double height and

2 the scsi connector is unlike any of the ones on my current hds i.e. not 'normal' and not scsi2 (like the connector on the Falcon. (I suspect the connector must be one of these 'wide' or 'ultra-wide' types I have heard about ?)

Can I get an adaptor to be able to use it in my tower ?

Finally, there is a sticker on the drive which says 'Single End'. Can anyone explain what this means ?

If anyone there had been selling SyJet carts I would not have these problems..."

Kevin Dermott tells James:

"I have a Barracuda in an external box with an adaptor to the existing cable and it works fine."

James tells Kevin:

"I have since learned a little more about my purchase. I went to the Seagate site and got the spec sheet; it is apparently a SCSI-2 Fast Wide mechanism. Hopefully a trip to a local computer shop will provide me with the adaptor I need.

I also spotted that Seagate supply manuals on-line to download, so I got the one for this drive (about 800k).

Unfortunately, it was only available in .PDF format (Adobe Acrobat?)!!

Can anyone suggest a way of converting it to ascii on the Atari ?"

Nicholas Bales, helpful as ever, tells James:

"If the PDF file is online, then Adobe has an online PDF to HTML converter through which you can pass it. I don't know the URL, but surely you can start looking at http://www.adobe.com"

John Garone asks:

"Has anyone heard of a program (for a Falcon030) that plays .MP3 music files?"

Didier Mequignon tells John:

"Maybe you can look on my page, it’s a beginning, please wait for a final version in 68K/DSP (without FPU), now I wait 1 mn for listen an MP3 44,1 KHz 128 Kbits/s stereo of 22 seconds on my centurbo II.

Now the FPU is always used and only 2 stages use DSP.
http://perso.wanadoo.fr/didierm/files/anip208b.zip (beta-version)

And you have another project, FalcAMP from Sector One, at this URL:
http://deunstg.free.fr/sct1/falcamp.htm"

Chris Crosskey adds:

"There’s supposed to be one in development...from what I’ve read a Falcon will just about have enough MIPS to do it if the DSP is used properly and you have an FPU fitted...it’s marginal and I doubt if the machine can even display a screen whole it does it, though I’d lover to be proved wrong and have an MP3 player that only used the DSP and left everything else for my PCB CAD package..."

Steve Sweet asks for help with aFTP:

"I’m having problems with aFTP version 1.54b. I cannot connect to a lot of sites, I get an error, cannot resolve host, almost instantaneously. I found a different TCP module yesterday and tried this tonight with no success.

I suspect it’s a configuration cock-up. some sites I can connect to, such as ftp.sofa.dartnet.co.uk, but the one announced in here regularly ftp.chapelie.rma.ac.be, refuses to play ball. Could some of you offer me your experience please?"

Michael Freman tells Steve:

"I’ve had the same problems from time to time. I don’t know if they only allow access at certain times of day, but I’ve only been able to access that FTP site at certain times of the day and not others.

This is with both aFTP 1.53 and 1.54. Or it could also have been something to do with my ISP, I guess, I don’t know."

Martin "Nightowl" Byttebier adds another possible reason for the problem:

"You are using the wrong address for the Belgian ftp-site. It’s ’chapelie.rma.ca.be’ or ’193.190.204.128’. Do NOT add ’ftp’ to the address."

Jacob Maier asks for help with using an Atari Laser Printer with a PC:

"I just found a SLM804 which appears to be in good repair. However I am now running a PC. So I want find a cable or set of adapters that would allow me to plug into a regular printer port. I will also need to run some sort of driver. Any help would be appreciated."

Roger Cain tells Jacob:

"Sorry, Jacob, the SLM804 uses the ST RAM as a page buffer. You can’t get a PC to behave in this way."

Peter Schneider tells Jacob that it’s...

"Impossible! The only chance you have is to install a small network with an Atari as printer server..."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Another short column, I know, but I guess that as the summer winds down people just have other things to do. I'm sure that as fall brings the temperature down lower and the sun down sooner people will again turn to the UseNet and bring us more pearls of wisdom.

Here in the northeast we are, at this very moment, weathering the forces of hurricane Floyd. The rain has been unbelievable here, and the winds are picking up even as I type this. It's nowhere near as bad as it could have been, but it's still troublesome. All in all, I'd say that the entire east coast of the United States got fairly lucky.

Stay safe, stay dry, and always... always... listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Sony Announces PlayStation2 Date!
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Sega Sets Sales Record?!
PSX2 Details! Dreamcast Glitch!
Microsoft's 'X-Box'! Songbird News!
Battlesphere News! And much more!

->From the Editor's Controller - Playin' it like it is!
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All kinds of gaming news this week! The Dreamcast has been available for a little over a week now; already news about it has died down. Sony has recently announced their target date for releasing the PlayStation2. Microsoft is dodging questions about their reported new set-top box, code-named "X-Box". And more.

Out of all of the articles I've read this week, the one that really caught my eye referred to the report that Sega's Dreamcast set a sales record for an entertainment product. Here's the paragraph to which I'm referring:

> Sega of America, a unit of Japan-based Sega Enterprises Ltd , claimed the tally made Dreamcast the biggest selling entertainment product ever on its first day on the market, eclipsing the $28 million first-day box office total of ''Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace'' earlier this year."

What a beautiful piece of marketing! Taken literally, this "fact" is true. Sure, Sega had $97 million in sales - to consumers or retailers, or both? But who's splitting hairs?! <g> As an Atari Jaguar fan, let's "Do the

Math!". How many Star Wars tickets sold did it take to result in $28 million first-day sales? Let's estimate that tickets were $10.00 each. That's 2.8 millions tickets sold the first day!

How much is the Dreamcast? Twenty times the cost of a Star Wars ticket? It doesn't matter for my peeve! According to another article (both are included in this issue), Sega sold 372,000 Dreamcast units, in the first four days - for a total revenue of $133 million. Do the math....

It's all marketing garbage. And people eat this hype up; they believe the numbers without understanding what they mean! Who had the greater impact: Star Wars with 2.8 million first day ticket-buyers, or Sega with less than a half million buyers? Who had more dollar bills? Simple, the one with the higher-priced product! This is not brain surgery!

What's my point? Understand what you read, especially as a consumer. Don't get caught up in the marketing hype. Sales figures - especially those coming directly from the company - are to be taken with a large grain of salt. There's no breakdown for the revenue, for obvious reasons. Just my two cents worth...

Until next time...

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Sony Names Launch Date For Playstation 2

Sony Corp. will begin selling its PlayStation 2 video game player next March, three months later than originally planned, but the delay is unlikely to threaten its dominance of the $6.3 billion a year video-game industry, analysts said Monday.

The state-of-the art PlayStation 2 console will go on sale in Japan on March 4, in other Asian countries next summer, and in the United States and Europe next autumn.

Sony had been expected to begin selling the enhanced version of the world's top-selling video game player -- and biggest contributor to its bottom line -- by December in Japan.

It will be priced at 39,800 yen ($368) in Japan, where a staggering one million units will be shipped in the first week, officials at Sony Computer Entertainment, a Sony unit, told a news conference.

Industry sources say Sony had earlier told its parts and chip makers that sales of PlayStation 2 would begin within this year. Analysts have speculated that Sony's lack of experience in turning out super-fast chips to be used in the new console may have contributed to the delay.

Sales of the current PlayStation accounted for around 40 percent of Sony's consolidated operating profit in the past year to March.

Analysts don’t expect the delay to have much impact on Sony’s forecasted net earnings of 110 billion yen for the current business year ending on March 31 because of the heavy volume of PlayStation 2 machines expected to be shipped within March.

‘‘Sony’s planning to sell one million consoles in the first two days of the launch and then at least another 500,000 in the next few weeks," said Universal Securities analyst Motoharu Sone.

‘‘They had forecast two million units for this business year so its not going to mean that big a difference."

Sega Enterprises Ltd. has beaten rivals Sony and Nintendo Co Ltd. to the punch in releasing a more powerful game player. Tokyo-based Sega has already released its $199 Dreamcast machine, the first to feature 128-bit computer chip technology and Internet capability.

Dreamcast enjoyed whopping first-day sales of near $100 million when it hit the U.S. market last Thursday, double the company’s original estimate.

Its success is seen as make or break for Sega after its predecessor, the 1995 Sega Saturn, flopped badly. Since then, the company has seen its U.S. market share slide to one percent from 50 percent in the early 1990s.

Kyoto-based Nintendo, the world’s second-largest video game player maker, plans to begin selling a next-generation game console, the Dolphin, in time for the 2000 Christmas shopping season.

But even with a year’s lead in the United States, analysts expect Sega to be little more than an minor irritant to rivals Sony and Nintendo.

In the United States the current PlayStation has around 60 to 70 percent of the market for larger video game consoles, with most of the rest going to the Nintendo 64 console, analysts said.

In most other regions of the world, PlayStation dominance is overwhelming.

Many consumers are likely to be willing to wait for PlayStation 2 because it will be the first ‘‘backwards compatible" console allowing existing Sony games to be played on it.

It will also have Internet capability, superior graphics and use digital video disc (DVD) technology that will allow it to hold around five times the data of Dreamcast.

PlayStation to Form Basis for E-Distribution Business in 2001

Sony Computer Entertainment Charts PlayStation2 Network Strategy

Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Monday announced that it will establish its revolutionary computer entertainment system, PlayStation2, as a platform for Internet-based electronic distribution of digital content in 2001.

The PlayStation changed the business model for interactive content distribution through the use of CD-ROM as a delivery medium. CD-ROM

provided shorter lead times resulting in better inventory and distribution management, removing many of the difficulties associated with mask-ROM cartridges. PlayStation2 offers a further improved packaged media distribution model by employing both CD-ROM and DVD-ROM.

In addition to packaged media and recognizing the potential of broadband networks to offer the consumer a vast selection of content and the convenience of download capability, Sony Computer Entertainment will establish broadband distribution of digital content, beginning with the PlayStation and PlayStation2 software libraries. With an Ethernet connection to a broadband network such as digital cable, PlayStation2 users will be able to download data-intensive computer entertainment content to hard-disc drives to be provided by Sony Computer Entertainment.

Sony Computer Entertainment will develop an electronic transaction system, including authentication and encryption technology, to support the e-distribution system. The company will also include in 2001 a PlayStation2 expansion module as a network adapter (PC card interface) and establish an e-distribution server.

Content Developers, Publishers, Software Tool Makers Gather to Support PlayStation2

More Than 200 Companies Worldwide Announce Support For New Computer Entertainment Platform

Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. (SCEI) today revealed massive third party support for its new computer entertainment platform, PlayStation2.

The long list of companies includes not only prominent game publishers currently supporting the PlayStation, but also famous names from a wide range of entertainment fields. This expansive support exceeds that of the launch of the original PlayStation, whose success has been due in great part to the broad variety of third party content available for the platform.

In Japan, where the system is set to debut on March 4, 2000, 89 publishers have signed license agreements to develop content for PlayStation2. Additionally, 46 North American companies and 27 European companies have signed letters of intent in preparation for the overseas launch of PlayStation2 in Fall 2000.

Interest is also strong among tool and middleware developers with 45 companies indicating strong support. In addition to software development libraries supplied by SCEI, the crucial tools and middleware these companies bring to the platform ensure an environment in which software developers can create the very best entertainment content for PlayStation2.

PlayStation2 Accessories

New Digital Analog Controller ‘Dual Shock’2

Large Capacity Memory Card Unveiled

Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. announced the release of two new accessories for its revolutionary computer entertainment system, PlayStation2.

Product Name:	"Dual Shock"2 Analog Controller SCPH - 10020
Suggest Retail Price:	3,500 Yen (tax not included)
Available:	March 4, 2000

Product Name:	Memory Card (8MB) SCPH - 10010
Suggested Retail Price:	3,500 Yen (tax not included)
Available:	March 4, 2000

With the exception of the ‘‘start" and ‘‘select" buttons, all the functions of the ‘‘Dual Shock"2 are analog, making for a wider variety of user operations and a more compelling interactive experience. The ‘‘Dual Shock"2 is also backward compatible with all PlayStation software supporting the original ‘‘Dual Shock" analog controller.

The new memory card has a storage capacity of 8MB of data, and a data transfer rate up to 250 times faster than the current memory card. In the interests of data security for potential future network applications, the memory card incorporates the authentication and encryption security system, ‘‘MagicGate."

Microsoft Developing Games Console

Microsoft Corp is secretly developing a PC-based computer games console to compete in the market dominated by Sony, Sega and Nintendo, the Sunday Times said Sunday.

While Microsoft officially denies the existence of the set-top box for home computers, codenamed the X-box, the Sunday Times said a number of developers were briefed with the details at a trade show in London last week.

They were taken to a nearby hotel and asked to sign non-disclosure agreements, the newspaper said, adding Microsoft said it never commented on speculation or rumor.

Microsoft is already involved in games development and has contributed technology to Sega’s new Dreamcast console. Sony, the market leader, and Nintendo are to launch their next-generation platforms, PlayStation 2 and Dolphin, next year.

The Sunday Times quoted Chris Deering, president of Sony computers in Europe, as saying, ‘‘If there is any truth in these rumors, the move seems to be a signal of disappointment, and one of loss of confidence in Sega’s new Dreamcast in which Microsoft is a partner."

Sega Dreamcast Sales Near $100 Million In One Day

Sega of America on Friday said its new Dreamcast video game player had whopping first-day sales of $97.9 million, more than doubling company expectations for the product’s first 24 hours on the market.

Sega of America, a unit of Japan-based Sega Enterprises Ltd , claimed the tally made Dreamcast the biggest selling entertainment product ever on its first day on the market, eclipsing the $28 million first-day box office total of ‘‘Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace" earlier this year.

Retail stores across the company began selling Dreamcast just after midnight on September 9.

Dreamcast is Sega’s new game player with faster playing speeds than its rivals, Sony’s Playstation and Nintendo 64. It also includes Internet capabilities like chat, e-mail and browsing on the Dreamcast Network.

Sega Dreamcast Breaks Another Industry Record, Tops Total Units Sold Mark

Sega Dreamcast Sells Through More Than 370,000 Units in Four Days, Beats Previous Industry Record

Sega’s 128-bit, Internet-ready Sega Dreamcast videogame console continued to fly off the shelves at retail outlets across the country this weekend following its record-setting launch on 9.9.99.

Sega officials announced today that Sega Dreamcast has surpassed the previous record for total units sold in the first four days of availability, bringing total revenue to $132,712,000. Sega sold a total of 372,000 Sega Dreamcast systems in just four days, easily surpassing the previous industry record holder, Nintendo 64, which took six days to hit 350,000 when it launched in 1996. In the first 24 hours of availability, Sega Dreamcast netted more than $97 million at retail, more than tripling the past entertainment industry record set by Star Wars: The Phantom Menace at $28 million on its first day(1).

Equally as impressive as the hardware sales of Sega Dreamcast, were related software sales in the first four days. First and third party software sold at an average tie ratio of three to one -- three games for each system sold. Contributing to the software sales success was the availability of 18 titles at launch, another videogame industry record. Toys ’R Us announced on Friday they had completely sold out of Sega Dreamcast in all of their 705 retail outlets by 1 p.m. that day.

‘‘We have no doubt that the Sega Dreamcast system will continue its record selling pace," declared Chris Gilbert, senior vice president of sales, Sega of America. ‘‘Retailers are already proclaiming it the ’must have’ product for the holiday season. With our low price point at $199, Internet connectivity and 40 titles by year end, consumers will have plenty of reasons to pick up a Sega Dreamcast in the upcoming months."

On September 9th, Babbage’s, Etc., parent company of the Babbage’s and Software Etc. retail chains also had a record sales day -- more than doubling their previous high sales day -- and were well on their way to selling through all of the more than 100,000 pre-sell orders.

‘‘There is simply no comparison to the launch of Sega Dreamcast," said

Daniel DeMatteo, president, Babbage’s, Etc. ‘‘This launch easily surpassed our expectations and we expect consumer demand to get even stronger as we head into the important holiday shopping months."

In addition to its sales figures, Sega also announced today they had begun shipping systems and games to replenish store shelves left bare following last Thursday’s launch. In addition, the company began distribution of new game discs and Sega Dreamcast web browser discs to replace the very small quantity of software that was found to be defective on Friday.

Anyone with a defective game disc is encouraged to return it to the retail outlet where it was purchased for an exchange. Consumers with defective web browsers are asked to go to sega.com and click on customer service or call 877/383-3291 to have a new disc sent to them directly.

Sega’s Dreamcast Has a Glitch

Sega Enterprises Ltd. acknowledged Friday that some of the software for its new Dreamcast video-game system doesn’t work, only a day after the much-hyped system hit store shelves.

Sega spokeswoman Jennifer Walker said that only a small quantity of some of the new Dreamcast games were affected, blaming it on a manufacturing problem.

The games affected were Blue Stinger, Sonic the Hedgehog, Hydro Thunder and Ready to Rumble. The company emphasized the problems were not related to the Dreamcast console.

Struggling Sega has been counting on Dreamcast to vault it back to the top of the U.S. video-game market, and analysts had warned that any problems could be devastating to the company.

Retailers said, however, that glitches weren’t immediately impacting sales, which were going quite well. Toys R Us said that all of its 705 stores nationwide sold out of the Dreamcast console on Thursday.

Sega said late Friday that it had recorded $97 million in initial sales of equipment and games on Thursday, easily surpassing the company’s expectations.

Sam Kennedy, news editor of the San Francisco-based videogames.com Web site, said that even a minor glitch could be a big problem for Sega.

‘‘They had a lot of hype for this system and they had a great launch up until now," he said. ‘‘This may not seem like a big deal, but they can’t really afford any problems right now."

Customers quickly noticed that some of their games weren’t working, retailers said.

‘‘We started hearing stuff from some of the consumers who had come in at midnight. Their games weren’t loading properly. We started making Sega aware of what we were hearing," said Peter Roithmayr, vice president of merchandising of video games at the Electronics Boutique chain, based in West Chester, Pa.

Roithmayr said customers were not very upset.

‘‘It is certainly not a panic thing. We have a small problem and it isn’t a hardware issue - which is good because a hardware problem is a lot tougher to fix."

At Software Etc. in New York City, manager Charles Stanley said several customers have come in to complain.

‘‘We’ve been fortunate, though. I’ve heard about lot of problems from people on the Internet and they aren’t happy."

Sega said the affected software amounts to less than 1 percent of the games and 1 percent of the WebBrowser CDs, used to help connect Dreamcast users to the Internet. The company said it would send out all new WebBrowser CDs on Monday.

Sega said customers with problems can send e-mail to support(at)sega.com or call 1-877-383-3291.

Sega Burns the Competition With ’CART - Flag to Flag’ for Sega Dreamcast

Get ready to put your Sega Dreamcast into overdrive! Sega of America announced Wednesday the release of the action-packed racing title, ‘‘CART - Flag to Flag" for Sega Dreamcast, the superconsole with a built-in 56K modem that brings the most-advanced and realistic video gameplay ever developed to consumers. Based on the official Championship Auto Racing Team (CART) license, ‘‘CART - Flag to Flag" offers gamers all the authenticity of a true-to-life CART race. From 19 challenging courses, intense 3D graphics, screechingly realistic audio and your choice of all the real CART vehicles and drivers, ‘‘CART - Flag to Flag" will leave its competitors in the dust. The renowned CART champion racing team ‘‘Team Rahal" also added their input to help make the title burn rubber! ‘‘CART - Flag to Flag" is available at retailers nationwide for $39.95.

‘‘CART - Flag to Flag" features real-time racing that takes into account environmental conditions that would affect the performance of the cars. When it rains, the tires on your car will change to adjust to the slick surface of the track. From the motor oil flying onto your windshield to changing weather conditions that affect the racer’s view, players will be so immersed in realism, they’ll think the race is truly taking place in their living room.

‘‘Sega Sports’ goal is to set all new standards in sports and racing games," said Greg Thomas, vice president of product development, Sega of America. ‘‘With ’CART - Flag to Flag,’ Sega Sports is bringing gamers the best in fast-action racing, 3D graphics and detail. What more could players want?"

Gamers have a choice of 27 official CART drivers from 17 different teams to race in the fastest form of closed-circuit auto racing in the world. Individual drivers have their own unique cars with their actual sponsor names printed on them. While racing, players can select up to five different camera perspectives whether it be behind the car, or head on. Sega also recorded actual engine sounds from CART Champ cars, including Bryan Herta, to help to heighten the realism surrounding the game.

It doesn’t stop there; ‘‘CART - Flag to Flag" is revving with realism. Players have the ability to set their own car during the practice and heat. To mark the fastest time in the championship, players can modify the angle of the front wing, rear wing, gear ratio and tires.

Using the advanced 128-bit graphic engine of the Sega Dreamcast system, ‘‘CART - Flag to Flag" delivers detail and incredible gameplay not seen in other racing titles. Players are engulfed in exact replicas of actual racing courses right down to the minute detail of chain links in the track fences. Racing in either Motegi, Japan, or Long Beach, California, players will see every detail specific to each individual track. Even the sponsors’ names are clearly seen on the cars and around the tracks and not just a blur that resembles the names like in conventional racing games.

‘‘CART - Flag to Flag" is available at retailers nationwide and at sega.com for $39.95.

Sega Sports NFL 2K for Sega Dreamcast Sets an All New Standard in Realistic Football Action

Forget all sports videogames from the past. A new era of sports gaming is now a reality with Sega Sports ‘‘NFL 2K" for Sega Dreamcast, the superconsole with a built-in 56K modem that brings the most-advanced and realistic video gameplay ever developed to consumers. Named ‘‘Best Sports Game" at the 1999 Electronic Entertainment Expo, ‘‘NFL 2K" for Sega Dreamcast redefines the true videogame sports experience with an unsurpassed level of detail in all aspects of the game. See sharp TV-style presentations that look like real video highlights from an actual game, players who fall based on the direction and force of tackles, team-specific plays and playbooks and all the signature touchdown celebrations you know from the real game. ‘‘NFL 2K" is available at retailers nationwide for $49.95.

Developed by Visual Concepts for Sega Sports, ‘‘NFL 2K" is chock-full of industry firsts. ‘‘NFL 2K" runs at 60 frames per second, making it the fastest console sports game on the market today. The game features more than 1,500 motion captured moves which allows for more realistic tackles, two-player wrap tackles and true-to-life animations. But it doesn’t stop there. Other firsts include on-field play-calling, play-calling on the controller using the Sega Dreamcast Visual Memory Unit to keep plays secret, twelve hours of audio commentary and incredible graphic detail. See breathe strips on players noses, the breath coming out of players’ mouths on a cold day, watch the ball spiral as it flies through air and see all your favorite players individually scaled to perfection. No sports game on any platform has achieved this high level of detail that makes every play feel like it is coming straight out of the NFL.

‘‘After experiencing ’NFL 2K’ for Sega Dreamcast, anyone who has ever played another sports game will never want to go back," said Greg Thomas, vice president of product development, Sega of America. ‘‘Sega Sports has redefined what ’a great football game’ means and you’ll see this when you play ’NFL 2K."’

‘‘NFL 2K" features more than 40 teams to choose from including 31 NFL teams, three all-pro teams and six alumni teams. The Fantasy Draft features allow gamers go head-to-head with the computer to bid for the best players in the league and a Tutorial Mode teaches beginner players the in-and-outs

of the game. ‘‘NFL 2K" also features an uninterrupted season mode, practice mode and four different types of tournament modes. Gamers can create their own teams, create a custom season and even put themselves in the game using the create-a-player mode that allows players to scale individual body parts.

Motion capturing more than 20 athletes and stuntmen, Sega Sports has hit their mark in their attempt to re-create the unique qualities of every position in the NFL. Sega also enlisted the help of real NFL coaches to make sure each play looks exactly right. Individual 3D player models were used to differentiate NFL player positions and gameplay reflects true-to-life physics. Lineman move slower (as 300 pounders tend to do), while wide receivers dash with lightning speed to pinpoint passes on crossing patterns. Due to advanced 3D collision techniques, players respond and fall based on where they are hit. The game detects exactly where and how hard the player is hit on the body and from there, the artificial intelligence (AI) determines the result -- players may fall, or they may just stumble. No other game on the market comes close to this level of accuracy.

In addition to the momentum-based physics, ‘‘NFL 2K" features an advanced AI perception system that creates a new gameplay situation on every play. Don’t even think about running the same play each time, the AI will learn your moves and use them to beat you! Unique to ‘‘NFL 2K," actual NFL coaches assisted with each play to ensure that gamers will recognize each team’s playing tendencies as being true to life. There are also team-specific plays and playbooks and a whopping 1,400 unique plays to choose from! If that’s not enough, players are also equipped with a hands-on, easy to use Play Editor for the real armchair quarterbacks out there!

Calling plays has never been better. No more little windows with misleading information, ‘‘NFL 2K" features the first-ever on-field play calling feature, allowing users to see a receiver or a running back’s route directly on the field. Football fans will also be able to use the VMU to gain strategic advantage over rivals. Gamers can selecting game plays and strategies on the VMU, adding an all new level of strategy to the game.

The advanced audio model of ‘‘NFL 2K" simulates an experience amazingly close to what you’d hear at an NFL stadium. Not only are team-specific sounds/chants and regional music trends accurate, but the implementation of spatial effects deliver a degree of realism never heard before in any sports-genre videogame. To top off the stunning audio, a roaming three-person television commentary team delivers more than 10,000 lines of smart commentary with the action of the football game as it happens. If you run a bad play, don’t be surprised if they make fun of you!

As an added bonus for novice gamers, the Coach’s Pick feature in the game allows players to select a play for the user. Coaching Mode calls the plays without controlling players on the field, this feature is key for players who aren’t good at performing special moves or maneuvering with the joystick.

‘‘NFL 2K" is officially endorsed by the NFL, Players Inc. and by NFL great Randy Moss, Minnesota Vikings wide receiver and spokesperson for ‘‘NFL 2K."

Berkeley Systems Launches Two New Jacks Back to Back

The Irreverent Quiz Show Party Game Debuts on the PlayStation

Berkeley Systems, Inc., a division of Sierra On-Line, Wednesday announced YOU DON'T KNOW JACK Offline and YOU DON'T KNOW JACK for the PlayStation game console officially shipped. YOU DON'T KNOW JACK Offline brings the best of the award winning YOU DON'T KNOW JACK the netshow (www.bezerk.com) to CD-ROM while YOU DON'T KNOW JACK for PlayStation finally brings the game based on a television game show to the player's living room TV. Created in partnership with Jellyvision, Inc., of Chicago, these titles fall under the Sierra Attractions brand of casual games.

''YOU DON'T KNOW JACK Offline has classic JACK trivia with new twists and surprises for the traditional JACK fan, while YOU DON'T KNOW JACK PlayStation is going to zap a completely different group of players," said David Houghtaling, Jellyvision's director for YOU DON'T KNOW JACK Offline. Jellyvision's director for the PlayStation game console edition of YOU DON'T KNOW JACK, Dan Fiden, added, ''Um. Yeah. What he said. (pause) Both new JACKs rock!"

''The JACK family of products keeps getting bigger and better," said Lori Tranquilla, marketing manager for Berkeley Systems. ''We're excited about extending the possibilities for JACK fans new and old."

Recreating the swift pace of a TV game show and the sarcastic musings of a game show host, YOU DON'T KNOW JACK for the PlayStation game console takes players on a wild ride with two CDs full of hilarious trivia. The 1,400 questions in this edition of YOU DON'T KNOW JACK combine great trivia with pop culture references in a witty, brain-twisting mixture that is as challenging as it is entertaining. The game, developed in partnership with Starsphere Interactive, features brand new questions and hilarious dialogue in addition to support of PlayStation peripherals such as the Dual Shock analog controller. YOU DON'T KNOW JACK for the PlayStation game console takes the tradition of social gaming to a new level by letting up to three players compete while lounging in the comfort of their own living room.

YOU DON'T KNOW JACK Offline features the best of the award winning YOU DON'T KNOW JACK the netshow. In addition to 800 vintage netshow questions, this edition of JACK also has 200 all-new questions. High culture and pop culture collide in this classic yet contemporary JACK experience. The game is decked out with new graphics and a brand new question type based on ''Pissed About a Question" letters sent by JACK fans. The game features vintage JACK material that cannot be found anywhere else. In addition, YOU DON'T KNOW JACK Jumbo will also be available this September and includes the entire JACK series, Volume One through YOU DON'T KNOW JACK Offline.

YOU DON'T KNOW JACK for the PlayStation game console retails for $39.95, and YOU DON'T KNOW JACK Offline is available as a Macintosh and Windows 95/98 compatible CD-ROM for $29.95. YOU DON'T KNOW JACK Jumbo represents a great value at $49.95.

Hasbro Interactive Announces First Games Developed for State-of-the-Art Sega Dreamcast

Hasbro Interactive strengthens its position as an all-platforms games

publisher today with the announcement that it will release two titles this Fall for Sega Dreamcast -- Centipede under the Atari brand and Worms Armageddon under the MicroProse brand.

‘‘Sega Dreamcast represents the current state-of-the-art in console video games," said Tom Dusenberry, President of Hasbro Interactive. ‘‘The superior graphics offered by Sega Dreamcast makes it an excellent platform to further our goal of bringing the finest in video games to console players. The updated classic console gaming action of Centipede and the comic mayhem of Worms Armageddon are particularly well suited to this new system."

In Centipede players take the role of Wally, the village’s humble bean counter, as he is quickly recruited to man the village bug shooter and sent off to save the colony from the ruthless QueenPede and her destructive subjects - the spiders, scorpions, and fleas - as she sets out to conquer the peaceful wee people. Atari Centipede for Sega Dreamcast will take full advantage of the awesome computing power offered by this new gaming console, with additional adventure levels that will add increased variety, additional gameplay, and new dynamics to the game. Superior graphics and special effects will also be featured.

The third and final game in the award-winning Worms series, Worms Armageddon challenges the player to become supreme conqueror of the worm-scape by using their wits and a wacky assortment of weapons. It enhances original gameplay with exotic new weapons such as aqua sheep, earthquake, skunk and mole bomb, fantastic new single-player modes and 33 individually crafted missions. The scrappy, earth-dwelling stars of Hasbro Interactive’s new Sega Dreamcast title will keep players laughing and scratching their heads in thought through level after level. Hasbro Interactive’s recent release of Worms Armageddon for the PC has received critical acclaim from reviewers.

Midway Puts on its Gloves And Ships Ready 2 Rumble Boxing for Sega Dreamcast

Game Features Voice of World-Renowned Boxing Announcer Michael "Let’s Get Ready to Rumble" Buffer

Let’s Get Ready to Rumble! Midway Home Entertainment, one of the industry’s leading video game publishers and developers, today announced that it has released Ready 2 Rumble Boxing for Sega Dreamcast. Midway expects the game to sell at a one-to-one ratio with the quantity of Sega Dreamcast consoles available at the system’s launch. Ready 2 Rumble Boxing, the ultimate boxing video game experience, will also be released for the Nintendo 64, PlayStation game console and Game Boy Color later this year. Featuring the most famous voice in boxing, Michael ‘‘Let’s Get Ready to Rumble" Buffer, Ready 2 Rumble Boxing mixes hard-hitting arcade-style boxing action with tongue-in-cheek humor.

‘‘Ready 2 Rumble Boxing expands the niche in to the boxing genre adding a new brand to Midway’s trademark over-the-top sports games, says Paula Cook, director of marketing for Midway Home Entertainment. "Ready 2 Rumble Boxing combines the thrill of arcade-style game-play, realistic moves and strategy with a sarcastic comic twist that has become a Midway trademark.‘‘

In Ready 2 Rumble Boxing, players can compete as one of 16 boxers, each

with their own fighting style. Each boxer is hyper-realistic with an unlimited number of punch combinations for both realistic and over-the-top boxing styles. Players can compete in arcade-style mode, contending for a championship belt, or play head-to-head on the system. Ready 2 Rumble Boxing also features Championship Mode, in which players take on the role of boxer and manager, assuming control of managing money used to sign boxers and buy equipment for the gym. Players use the equipment to train and build up power, speed, stamina, punches and durability.

The Gate has Dropped!!! "Championship Motocross Featuring Ricky Carmichael" Races Onto Store Shelves

THQ Inc. Monday announced the release of ‘‘Championship Motocross Featuring Ricky Carmichael." THQ and Funcom have teamed up to bring all the grit and intensity of motocross racing to motocross and PlayStation racing game enthusiasts.

Boasting the exclusive endorsement of three-time AMA National Motocross Champion Ricky Carmichael, ‘‘Championship Motocross Featuring Ricky Carmichael" is available at major retail outlets nationwide at a suggested retail price of $39.95.

‘‘‘Championship Motocross Featuring Ricky Carmichael’ is the most accurate motocross racing simulation available for the PlayStation," stated Alison Locke, senior vice president sales and marketing, THQ. ‘‘Coupling Ricky Carmichael’s growing notoriety among the millions of hardcore motocross racing fans with truly fun gameplay positions THQ perfectly for the release of our first motocross franchised game."

‘‘Playing the game with the fans at the pro and amateur events over the past few months has been a blast," said Ricky Carmichael, who recently seized his third consecutive AMA National Motocross Championship title. ‘‘It’s awesome that THQ has been able to get it into the kids’ hands so we could all see just how excited the real fans are about the game."

‘‘Championship Motocross featuring Ricky Carmichael" gives racers the opportunity to compete as three-time AMA National Motocross Champion Ricky Carmichael. Players will enjoy superb graphics and visual effects like flying dirt, exhaust smoke and real-time track and biker lighting, as they maneuver through twelve unique tracks from around the world.

Funcom’s proprietary ‘RMD’ (Real Motocross Dynamics) bike physics system is the first to deliver realistic and responsive rider dynamics both on the ground and in the air. ‘‘Championship Motocross(TM) Featuring Ricky Carmichael" enjoys licensing support from Kawasaki, Fox Racing, Oakley, Bell Helmets and Alpinestars.

In 1998, Carmichael was the first rider in history to win every race in the 125cc Supercross Series, winning the Eastern Regional title and the East-West Shoot-Out in Las Vegas. Since turning professional in 1996, he also has three AMA National Championships to his credit. Carmichael has dominated the 125cc class like no other rider in the history of the sport. His next race is the THQ US OPEN, the world’s richest indoor motocross event. The THQ US OPEN will be held at the MGM Grand Hotel Garden Arena in Las Vegas the weekend of Oct. 9-10.

989 Sports Dominates Hockey Videogame Category With All-New NHL FaceOff 2000

Fastest Hockey Videogame On the PlayStation Returns With All-New Gameplay Features

989 Sports announced Monday that NHL FaceOff 2000, the fifth edition of the highly touted hockey videogame series for the PlayStation game console, will be available Wednesday.

NHL FaceOff 2000 has all the NHL teams and players, authentic two-man commentary featuring New Jersey Devils play-by-play announcer Mike Emrick and ESPN's Darren Pang, interactive crowds, enhanced Artificial Intelligence, and a dramatic new TV-style presentation and ''puck halo" feature.

''NHL FaceOff 2000 complements 989 Sports' strong videogame heritage in being able to capture the realism, excitement and fun of hockey action," said Jeffrey Fox, vice president, marketing, 989 Studios. ''The NHL FaceOff 2000 development team has truly captured the hard-hitting energy and intensity of hockey and delivered it right into the hands of the videogamer."

Last year, NHL FaceOff '99 was the first hockey videogame to have motion capture animations performed on ice. It featured moves from St. Louis Blues winger Scott Young and former San Jose Sharks goaltender Kelly Hrudey. This year, NHL FaceOff 2000 has built on the success of the NHL FaceOff franchise to include motion capture animations from Chicago Blackhawks winger Tony Amonte and Phoenix Coyotes goaltender Nikolai Khabibulin -- totaling more than 150 new player animations. Every subtle and personalized move is perfected to amazing detail.

New I.C.E. AI(TM) (Intelligence Comprehension Execution Artificial Intelligence), developed with eight-time Stanley Cup champion and Red Wings head coach Scotty Bowman, has players playing and reacting just as they do in the NHL. Icon Passing and Icon Switching bring incredible realism and control to players as they battle for the puck in offensive and defensive zones. The new ''Puck Halo" will make the puck easier to see, and play within the corners and in front of the goal. Players can sprint across the blue line on a breakaway, and glide in and unleash a slap shot that hits the post or goes too high and hits the boards.

With the use of actual blueprints, arenas are re-created in amazing detail. The new 3D player models capture every nuance with real texture-mapped faces, which are true to the facial features of NHL stars. Increased camera angles, pop-up stats and in-game panels work in cadence with the authentic audio of play-by-play announcer Mike Emrick and color commentator Darren Pang, creating the best TV-style presentation available for a hockey videogame.

NHL FaceOff 2000 incorporates all 28 NHL teams for the 1999-2000 season (including the Atlanta Thrashers) with updated rosters and the ability to play through an entire season. Gamers can track more than 30 individual and team stats and compete for any of 15 NHL awards, including the Hart Memorial, Art Ross, Vezina, Conn Smythe, Presidents and the Stanley Cup.

NHL FaceOff 2000 features Philadelphia Flyers All-Star winger John LeClair on the package.

NHL FaceOff 2000 Key Features:

-- Every player and team for the 1999-2000 season is included -- even the Atlanta Thrashers. In addition, eight international teams are also included

-- New I.C.E. AI (Intelligence Comprehension Execution Artificial Intelligence) allows players to play and react just as they do in the NHL. Red Wings coach Scotty Bowman consulted on the development of I.C.E. AI, providing his insight into offensive and defensive strategies

-- Realistic 3D player models based on player size, weight and facial appearance

-- Unrivaled 3D game engine

-- TV-style presentation features two-man commentary, including New Jersey Devils' acclaimed announcer Mike Emrick and ESPN's analyst Darren Pang

-- New action camera provides impressive TV-style telecast

-- Realistic skating physics lets players and puck glide naturally across the ice. Players utilize cross-over steps when turning and skating backwards -- just as in the NHL

-- More than 150 new player animations

-- Motion captured animations performed on ice provide the most realistic hockey action available. Players motion captured include Chicago Blackhawks winger Tony Amonte, Phoenix Coyotes goaltender Nikolai Khabibulin, St. Louis Blues winger Scott Young and former San Jose Sharks goaltender Kelly Hrudey

-- New "Puck Halo" makes the puck easier to see and play within the corners and in front of the net

-- Interactive crowds include: Team chants, yells and special animations such as hats being thrown onto the ice after a hat trick

-- Seven different game-play camera angle option settings and countless cut-aways, zoom-ins, pop-up stats and in-game panels

-- NHL arenas presented in lifelike detail -- each arena's characteristics are included, even the championship banners and Jumbotrons

-- New licensed music with arena favorites like: "Respect", "Shout", "Mony Mony", "Louie Louie", "That's the Way, I like it", "Whooly Bully" just to name a few

-- Refined Icon Switching on defense and Icon Passing on offense translate into the most realistic hockey control available

-- On-the-fly strategy control lets the gamer change his attack with the touch of a button

-- Full season and game statistics available in every offensive and defensive category

-- Create and manage teams with complete rosters -- draft, trade, release and sign free agents

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->A-ONE Gaming Online - Online Users Growl & Purr!

BattleSphere Update: 9/13/1999

From: Brian Gudzevich <atarian@mediaone.net>

Originally posted at thunderbird’s Garage
http://home.sprynet.com/~thunderbird/

The clock is ticking!

4Play is proud to announce that it will only be a matter of weeks until we will have utterly defeated the encryption code for BattleSphere. We are using a proprietary method which will allow us to encrypt the binary without using any hardware bypassing techniques.

After carefully considering the options, a software scheme seemed like the right thing to do. While hardware bypassing is currently an alternative, it adds significant cost to the manufacturing. Hardware bypass would require an entirely new circuit board be designed and fabricated. All existing circuit board stockpiles are relegated worthless by hardware bypass techniques. Since the market is small for Jaguar games and we don’t have the economy of scale to offset production costs, designing new boards adds a large cost to the price of a cartridge. However, we are working very carefully to reduce these unnecessary costs while delivering the polished, professional product the Jaguar Community deserves. Price has been a primary concern to many of you, so we determined that a little more work to insure a reasonable price is worth the effort. Hence, we invented this ingenious method for software encryption.

Our clever software scheme employs a "brute force" method of cracking encryption by utilizing a bank of 8 specially modified Jaguar consoles with a custom patched version of the standard Boot ROM and a few modifications to the BattleSphere executable itself, which runs in a hardware hacked EPROM cartridge. The exact details of our technology will be revealed in the future, as we do not wish to give an advantage to our competition in the cartridge manufacturing market. Suffice it to say that this bank of Jaguars is constantly booting a self-modifying binary and checking if the Jaguar Boot ROM has failed or passed the software encryption. Once the binary boots, the encryption is successful! Our calculations indicate that it should take a maximum of 125 days for this process to try ALL the possible encryption combinations, but the odds are evenly distributed around 1/2 that amount of time.

Keep your fingers crossed!

Atari Zone Fanzine Update

From: Dan Iacovelli

Vol 9 #6 of the Atari Zone Fanzine is now finished!!!

This issue mostly covers the 2 biggest conventions that happened this year (JagFest'99 and CGE'99).

If you're a fanzine/e-zine member than this issue will be mailed to you in a week or so. If you're not than you can request the issue for free by using the club information form at the website.

Dan Iacovelli
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AVC online=Http://www.angelfire.com/ia/AtariVideoClub/AVC.html

Songbird Productions Update

From: Carl Forhan <forhan@midas.millcomm.com>

The Songbird Productions catalog has been updated with a variety of new items, from Desert Strike to Sokomania to Hyperdrome. Be sure to check it out at http://songbird.atari.org, and place your order today.

PLUS:

The "September Sizzle" promotion -- buy any single Lynx game for $39.95 (Ponx, Lexis, etc.), and buy SFX for only $27.95 more or Joust for only $7.95 more. Mention "September Sizzle" on your order form, and postmark the order by September 30th. Email first to confirm availability.

Look for *Jaguar* items such as Aliens vs. Predator, Fight For Life, Attack of the Mutant Penguins, and more to be added soon!

Carl Forhan
Songbird Productions
http://songbird.atari.org

AtariNews: On The Prowl
09/14/99

From: Brian Gudzevich <atarian@mediaone.net>

It’s now September, and there’s still news from the Classic Gaming Expo 1999 coming in. The new version of Stella Gets a New Brain is out, there is a new Lynx game available, and many things Atari are happening on the web. In the last issue, we told you Hyperdrome for the Lynx was available. Although it’s not listed on Telegames website, it is $39.95 plus shipping at www.telegames.com. Watch for the November issue of Gamefan. Skyhammer and Protector are to have a two page review in that issue. Also, we’d like to know what you think of the new AtariNews setup. Send your comments to atarian@mediaone.net.

STELLA GETS ANOTHER NEW BRAIN

Several years back, a group of people released a CD called Stella Gets A New Brain. On this disc was almost every game released for the Starpath Supercharger, a device designed in the early 80’s to load games from a cassette into the Atari 2600. Sadly, only about 350 of these CD’s were released. A few weeks back at CGE ’99, Cyberpunks Entertainment released version 2.0 of Stella Gets A New Brain. This disc has most of the contents of the original disc, as well as twelve more games, the song "Atari 2600" by Splitsville, and many new files for use on the PC. The cost of this 73 track disc is $30 + $3 S&H US. and it can be purchased at the address below.

http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/1698/cyberpunks/index.html

NEW INFORMATION ABOUT THE NEW ATARI 2600 GAMES RELEASED AT CGE ’99

Some general information about the two new Atari 2600 games released at CGE ’99 are available on the Ebivision home page. Merlin’s Walls is the first real time 3D game available for the 2600. You have to find your way out of the 3D maze before the timer runs out. The other game is Pesco. This is a Pac-man clone, where you are a fish, eating plankton while trying to avoid three crabs. Information about these games as well as Alfred’s challenge can be found at:

http://www.ebivision.com

SOKOMANIA IS AVAILABLE NOW!

Sokomania is now available for the Atari Lynx. The idea of this strategy puzzle game is to push boxes to their destination in a warehouse. This game was developed by MW Software and will be available for purchase from Songbird Productions on September 15th for $39.95.

http://songbird.atari.org

THE ALL ATARI AUCTION

Are you a frequent user of eBay, or another auction service to find your Atari Products? Now there’s a new site you may be interested in, called Atari Auction. Here you will find nothing but Atari stuff up for auction. If you have Atari products you’d like to sell, you can also auction them here, and be sure they are seen by other Atari users.

http://www.atariauction.com/

WHAT’S HAPPENING WITH ATARI.ORG?

Atari.org is still currently having network problems. All subdomains are now back up and running, as is email. But hosted sites are still not back up, and nether is Pop3 email access. Their server, made out of all second hand parts, was hit with a power surge during several power outages, and was fried. They are still working to revive the backups, and are looking into other alternatives to get the system back online. If you would like to find out more, or even better, try to help out in any way, then go to:

http://www.atari.org

Send any comments or submissions for "AtariNews: On The Prowl" to:
Brian Gudzevich (Editor) at: Atarian@mediaone.net

AtariNews: On the Prowl is sponsored by The
Atarian Atmosphere and Songbird Productions.

Atari Jaguar Games Poll Still Underway

From: Songbird <forhan@midas.millcomm.com>

If you haven't voted yet, please visit:

http://apps3.vantagenet.com/zpolls/poll.asp?id=981715950

and vote for the upcoming Jaguar games you plan on purchasing. These numbers will be used to gauge how many carts to manufacture, so your input is important! There is only one question to answer in the survey.

Thanks,

Carl Forhan
Songbird Productions
http://songbird.atari.org

Atari Shown At Gravity Games

Last week, at the Gravity Games in Providence, RI, Hasbro Interactive unveiled several of it's upcoming games to the public. Among the games shown were Pong (PSX), Nerf Arena Blast (PC) and Centipede (Dreamcast). Hasbro is putting a large marketing force behind its Atari brand, and the Gravity Games is just one of the many places consumers will see the Atari logo.

"It's a big priority for Hasbro to re-launch these classic games," said Rich Cleveland, VP of marketing for Hasbro Interactive. "It's the right time for Atari... The Atari brand is classic gameplay and has stood the test of time."

Hasbro Interactive is the exclusive toy and game sponsor on the inaugural Gravity Games, and will be running TV ads throughout the Games, which will be televised on NBC.

"The Gravity Games and Atari are a perfect fit," said Tom Dusenberry, president of Hasbro Interactive. "Among the youth that watch and participate in the high-energy sports of the Gravity Games, the Atari fuji is an icon that they relate to in a very positive manner. Atari games are legendary for their fast gameplay and competitive, score-based premises. The Gravity Games is a great association for our Atari games and a great venue to unveil our new Atari releases to the public."

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Microsoft Chairman's Credibility Attacked By U.S.

Video testimony by Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates at the software company's antitrust trial was "bizarre" and ''simply not credible," the U.S. government said in a court filing submitted Friday.

Microsoft, filing its own written arguments, matched that harsh rhetoric by accusing the government of offering "bluster" instead of facts.

The written arguments came in response to hundreds of pages of documents submitted by both sides in federal court last month, and pave the way for oral arguments Sept. 21.

U.S. District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson will sort through the arguments to help him decide what was proved as fact during 76 days of trial testimony in his Washington, D.C., courtroom. He is expected to issue his findings of fact in October, and then there will be more papers and arguments so the judge can reach conclusions of law.

The Justice Department and 19 states say Microsoft holds monopoly power in the Windows operating system for personal computers.

The government alleges that Microsoft abused its monopoly power to defeat would-be rivals such as Netscape -- now a unit of America Online Inc. -- which makes an Internet Web browser that competes with Microsoft's.

Redmond, Wash.-based Microsoft issued a flat denial to the charge in its filings Friday, asserting: ''Microsoft is not a monopolist."

The government told the judge he could not believe much of the testimony offered by Microsoft's witnesses, arguing that company employees in their testimony had contradicted memos and electronic mail messages they had written earlier.

But the government saved its harshest words for Gates himself, who appeared in hours of videotaped testimony shown at the trial.

The government said evidence at the trial showed Microsoft recognized in mid-1995 that Netscape's browser ''seriously threatened to erode" one of

the pillars of its monopoly. The government said the evidence for that proposition was undisputed, ‘‘except for bizarre assertions by Mr. Gates in his deposition."

Gates had written memos in mid-1995 raising a red flag about Netscape’s competitive abilities, and those memos were among the documents offered by the government in evidence. But in his taped testimony, Gates said in mid-1995 he was unaware of any threat posed by Netscape.

The government said that in the face of all the evidence, Gates’ assertion ‘‘that he was not aware at the time even what Netscape was doing ... is simply not credible."

For its part, Microsoft dismissed many of the assertions of the government by saying that the ‘‘fanfare of the trial is over; it is now time to look at what the evidence shows."

By Microsoft’s lights, the government evidence does not show much. ‘‘Despite their bluster, plaintiffs have failed to prove their case," it said.

For example, Microsoft noted that the government’s leading economic witness, Franklin Fisher, had testified that Microsoft charged less than the maximum possible price for its Windows operating system.

Microsoft said such restraint shows ‘‘there are real constraints on Microsoft’s ability to charge higher prices." Economists say price constraints demonstrate a company is not a monopolist.

The government’s Fisher said Microsoft used some of its monopoly power to keep would-be competitors at bay instead of charging top dollar.

The government also said Microsoft unfairly and illegally "welded" its Web browser to Windows and gave it away for free in an attempt to make Netscape’s browser irrelevant.

But Microsoft said that an appellate court decision it won in a related case in June 1998 buttressed its right to make any changes it wanted.

It quoted the appellate court as saying the test of whether it had a right to integrate any new feature should be ‘‘merely whether there is a plausible claim that it brings some advantage."

Final Claims Made in Microsoft Case

Microsoft Corp. used its final written legal brief Friday to attack the government’s broad antitrust case against it, arguing its widely used Windows software doesn’t afford it monopoly power over the high-tech industry.

The government, in its written summary of the 76-day courtroom battle, responded that Microsoft’s software runs more than 90 percent of the world’s personal computers, and said no candidate capable of displacing it is likely to emerge for years.

U.S. District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson had given the two sides until Friday to file their final written versions of the facts in the landmark

case. The dictionary-size documents ran hundreds of pages each.

Friday’s exchange was expected to be the last before the first phase of the judge’s two-part ruling. That could come as early as late October. Courtroom arguments were set for later this month.

The government criticized as ‘‘bizarre assertions" Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates statement in a deposition before the trial that he wasn’t closely monitoring activities by rival Netscape Communications Corp. during the mid-1990s.

Microsoft, for its part, said the government’s earlier summaries of the case were ‘‘rife with internal inconsistencies and contain stunning concessions that undermine the claims alleged."

Microsoft said the government wrongly interpreted statements by computer makers when it told the judge that Microsoft’s control was so great that reasonable alternative to its Windows software was available to consumers.

Microsoft said it faces fledgling competition from an array of new technologies, including the upstart operating system called Linux, which is freely available on the Internet. An operating system controls the most basic functions of a computer.

‘‘What it shows instead is that if consumers express a desire for operating systems other than Windows, (computer makers) will promptly meet that demand - as they have started to do with Linux," Microsoft said.

The government said Microsoft was pointing to an array of technologies, ‘‘presumably with a straight face," that never will actually challenge the dominance of Windows, such as new hand-held computers and other high-tech devices.

‘‘Even Microsoft’s economist concedes that the speculation that the future may bring a competitive alternative to Microsoft’s captive customers is no more than speculation," the government said.

Microsoft urged the judge to note that, after testimony in the trial ended, Dell Computer Corp. agreed to sell Linux pre-installed on some desktop and notebook computers. It said Linux and another niche operating system, from Be Inc., ‘‘remain serious threats to Windows’ category leadership and well could displace Windows over time."

Microsoft lawyers also argued that the government was wrong in repeatedly asserting that other companies face unusually steep barriers to compete with Microsoft products.

They noted the announcement last month by Sun Microsystems Inc. that it would begin distributing free on the Internet a package of business software programs - including a word processor and spreadsheet - called ‘‘Star Office."

The first phase of the judge’s ruling, called his ‘‘findings of fact," is expected to telegraph in many ways the eventual second part of his verdict, which probably will come early next year unless the sides settle.

The judge’s factual findings also are particularly important because appellate courts rarely challenge a trial judge’s decisions on the facts of a case, but typically focus on his application of the law in the second phase.

New IBM Computer Raises Pressure

IBM is selling a powerful new business computer that fills an important gap in its product line and steps up pressure on rival sellers of machines that use the Unix operating system, a competitor to Microsoft’s Windows program.

IBM’s move is a counterpoint to a recent flurry of publicity for Sun Microsystems Inc.’s popular line of Unix computers. Hewlett-Packard Corp. also is a major maker of Unix computers.

IBM plans to unveil its new S80 computer on Monday, which it says outperforms rivals’ comparable products, able to handle more than 40,000 computing operations a second. The new model in IBM’s RS 6000 line costs $290,000 and uses up to 24 microprocessors made with copper, which performs better than the traditional aluminum used in chips.

IBM, also a maker of computer chips, was the first major company to switch to copper.

IBM officials said the new Unix machine is aimed at helping businesses handle heavy-duty corporate tasks, such as running Web sites, managing networks of desktop computers and processing millions of transactions.

‘‘This is clearly a gap we’ve had in our product line," said Rod Adkins, general manager for IBM’s RS 6000 unit.

IBM’s announcement comes after Sun took the spotlight last week by unveiling a bare-bones machine that never needs a software upgrade and is far simpler than conventional desktop computers. Customers need to buy a powerful Sun computer in order to run a network of the simple machines.

A week earlier, Sun said it bought a small maker of office productivity programs and intends to distribute the applications for free over the Internet, to anyone with a Web browser. That way, users don’t have to load bulky and expensive programs directly onto their computer desktop.

Handspring Ready To Launch PalmPilot Competitor

The inventors of the held-held computer that rocked the high-tech world are back -- this time with a new product aimed at knocking their own successful invention, the PalmPilot, off its pedestal.

Handspring Tuesday will take the wraps off the new product that’s been cloaked in secrecy over the past year.

The hand-held computer will be unveiled on the company’s Web site then and will only be sold online until early next year, when it is launched to retail channels, sources near the company said.

The Palm’s creators last year bolted from 3Com Corp., which owns Palm Computing, to found their new company, now known as Handspring, to compete against Palm in the hand-held computing market.

And if trade industry and media reports are accurate, the security was cloaking a product that’s basically an upgrade of the original Palm, and Handspring may have been trying to keep competitors from knowing exactly which features would be added.

With the new product, named ‘‘Visor," the Palm’s inventors apparently haven’t strayed far from their initial idea. Like the PalmPilot it’s a personal desk assistant that can be linked to desktop computers and networks. But it may do a better job of delivering updated features, according to analysts who were briefed.

A Time magazine reporter, Joshua Quittner, received a press briefing, and, despite being ‘‘bound by one of those silly nondisclosure agreements" reported: ‘‘If it’s as good as it looks in demos, I can’t imagine why anyone would want to buy anything else."

ZDNet, the online news service, reported that the Visor comes with modules that can make it work as a digital camera, music player, pager and wireless telephone, updating it for a consumer market with far more advanced digital devices and wireless services than when the Palm first appeared.

At $149 for the lowest-price version, Visor also significantly undercuts the cost of the Palm, whose price has reached a bloated $500-plus level in its latest incarnation, the newly launched Palm VII, according to ZDNet.

The upstart Handspring would ‘‘neither confirm nor deny" the details that have leaked out during a period of briefings given to the trade press and general media, but said that a product launch will take place.

Handspring will have its hands full trying to supplant its own creation, PalmPilot, which has a loyal following with about 4 million users and 15,000 software applications written for it.

But the new company is counting on strong demand among consumers for new portable computing devices that take advantage of Internet and wireless computing.

Breakthroughs in the speed and price of wireless applications are expected to boost the device market dramatically, which already is at $1 billion. Dataquest has forecast 30 percent annual growth in the handheld computer market, with sales reaching 21 million units a year by 2003.

The PalmPilot, invented by Handspring’s Donna Dubinsky and Jeff Hawkins, dominates that market now, with nearly 80 percent of the total. But the machines are aimed primarily at office users whos share data with their desktop. Visor, with its modular approach that uses Palm’s software, appears to be trying to hit more market segments, ranging from the general consumer to the office user.

’New Way’ Of Digital TV From Cablevision, Sony

Cablevision Systems Corp. and Sony Corp. have joined forces to develop a digital system allowing viewers to watch movies, play video games and send e-mail, all from one box on top of their set.

The system, described Thursday by Cablevision President and CEO Jim Dolan as ‘‘a whole new way of looking at your television set," is expected to be

launched in the New York area in a year’s time and reach an estimated three million homes.

Dolan said his company -- the sixth largest cable operator in the United States with 3.4 million subscribers -- would pay around $1 billion to Sony for the set-top boxes and the system could result in a reduction of monthly bills for customers.

‘‘The interactive TV top box puts the customer in charge of the service," Dolan told reporters in a conference call. ‘‘The potential new service is limitless, and since the customer is in control of the technology, it could almost lower monthly bills."

He declined to give further details, and a Cablevision spokesman could not say if the set-top box would have to be bought separately by the subscriber or if it would be included in the monthly bill. Dolan did not rule out the boxes being distributed through the Cablevision-owned The Wiz stores.

Howard Stringer, chairman and CEO of Sony Corp. of America, said the advantage of the cooperation for Sony was that "Cablevision wants to be the industry leader in the biggest market in America with the richest customers."

Exactly what services would be available, would depend on feedback from subscribers, Stringer said. ‘‘We are building this as we go along."

The proposed services includes a wide range of movies on-call, television programming, e-mail, interactive games and new programming. The system would also be ready to convert to new high definition television (HDTV).

Sony has access to the movie catalog of Columbia TriStar Pictures and its television division, and also markets both video games like PlayStation and recorded music.

Cablevision operates the American Movie Classics and Bravo cable networks, as well as Madison Square Garden network and owns the New York Rangers hockey team and basketball’s New York Knicks.

‘‘For Sony, we see this as another critical step in our strategy to marry the power of our electronics and technology assets with our vast entertainment holdings to create a compelling 21st century lifestyle experience," Stringer said.

However, Sony said the arrangement with Cablevision was not exclusive, suggesting that it could set up similar deals with other cable companies.

Asked by reporters about reports that Cablevision would pay $1 billion for three million set-top boxes, Dolan said: ‘‘The one billion figure is roughly correct.

‘‘This goes well beyond any satellite-delivered service," he said. ‘‘This is not just a cable company introducing another set-top box. It will be a whole new way of looking at your television."

He said Cablevision had ‘‘a firm commitment" for three million Sony boxes and will begin ‘‘aggressively deploying them in the summer of 2000."

Under the agreement, Sony will provide the system design and software integration of equipment and both companies will collaborate on development of digital entertainment services.

Intel: Sub-$1,000 Notebooks Possible

Could notebooks break the sub-$1,000 barrier? It’s not outside the bounds of reason, according to Intel Corp.

"We’re thinking that by the holiday season next year, there could be a switch in what you’re seeing for notebook prices, versus desktops. The delta could be a lot smaller," said Sam Wilkie, a product manager in Intel’s Mobile and Handheld Products Group.

Intel rolled out new 433MHz and 466MHz mobile Celeron processors on Wednesday. And notebook vendors Gateway and Dell Wednesday announced new systems with the Celeron chips, starting around $2,000.

However, once Intel’s mobile Pentium III hits the market this fall and an ongoing LCD panel shortage lifts, though, that $2,000 price tag could fall sharply.

"When people look at less than $2,000, they say, ’That has to be a Celeron processor’," Wilkie said. "That will change in the beginning of next year. We would expect to see Pentium III (notebooks) below $2,000 in the beginning of next year.

Once that occurs, "the Intel Celeron processor would definitely be a sub-$1,500 brand," Wilkie said.

And what about sub-$1,000 Celeron notebooks? "I think that is a possibility, long term, but it has to do with (LCD) panel availability and price," he said.

Gateway and many other vendors currently sell notebooks that are priced around $1,500. Its Solo 2500 model, for example, costs $1,549 with a 400MHz Celeron chip.

Andy Klopstad, Gateway Inc.’s consumer portable product manager, agrees that LCD panels will be a key component in sub-$2,000 laptops. "When you say sub-$2,000, it will also come down to what size panel these people are offering. Right now the panel is controlling that large percentage of the cost of notebooks," he said.

Wilkie would not detail specifics, but other Intel officials have said the mobile Pentium III chip will start at 400MHz, 450MHz and 500MHz. Notebooks will also get a boost from an increase in system bus speed from 66MHz to 100MHz, which is supported by the chips. The system bus is the pipeline over which data flows between the chip and the rest of the system components, such as memory.

Intel’s 433MHz and 466MHz Celeron announcement brought with it new models in Gateway’s Solo 9300 lineup, with support features, such as a CD-Rewritable drive from Gateway Inc.

Intel, however, feels this is an anomaly and that, given the chance, Gateway would have introduced CD-RW technology on a high-end Pentium II or Pentium III machine. The company considered releasing 433MHz and 466MHz mobile Pentium II processors, however "it didn’t make sense because the

Pentium III is so close," Wilkie said. "With the intro of the Pentium III processor you'll see new technology aligned with our premium brand," he said.

Gateway agrees, to some extent.

"CD-RW is an enthusiast product, still. At launch, the majority of people that would want the product would also want the 15-inch screen, the 18GB hard drive ... and the Pentium II," said Klopstad, adding that "there's no reason why someone who wants a CD-RW drive couldn't go with Celeron to save money."

Intel's mobile Pentium III is expected to debut in October.

And, while mobile Celeron will be low-cost, it won't be low on performance.

"Next year, We'll add even more performance to the Intel Celeron processor," Wilke said.

Intel will beef up the chip's performance in the first half of next year by moving it to Intel's 0.18 micron manufacturing process, he said. The benefits of the process, utilized by the forthcoming Pentium III, will be increased performance and lower power consumption.

Microsoft Reportedly Plans Web-Based Software

Software giant Microsoft Corp. plans to announce Monday a new strategy acknowledging that software developers are focusing more on the Web than on stand-alone computers, the Wall Street Journal reported in Monday's online edition.

Under the plan set to be unveiled in San Francisco, Microsoft will offer Web developers the ability to pull technology components from the Redmond, Wash.-based company's MSN Web site, the Journal said.

The Journal said the company is calling these components "megaservices," which include an Internet identification and payment technology named Passport.

The components will also include the LinkExchange system for exchanging banner adds, the Hotmail and Instant Messenger communication technologies, and Windows Update, a way of sending software upgrades and patches electronically, the paper said.

The paper said Microsoft is reorienting all of its products around this new approach called Windows DNA 2000, which the Journal said represents its ''most decisive shift" away from a personal computer based approach.

The Journal said the company will also use a standard technology known as Extensible Markup Language, or XML, which identifies different types of data on Web sites and can be used to automate processes that now must be executed manually.

''It's going to have as profound effect on the investments we make at Microsoft as the Internet did," Paul Maritz, group vice president heading Microsoft's relations with software developers told the Journal. ''This is what the company will be about."

Seagate Announces Layoffs, To Take $200 Million Charge

Seagate Technology Inc. said Tuesday it would cut its global work force by up to 10 percent in a move the world's largest computer disk drive maker said would save it $150 million a year.

The Scotts Valley, Calif.-based company said the reductions would be carried out over 9 months and would result in a restructuring charge of $200 million in its current quarter.

The cuts are also Seagate's latest move to restructure its operations amid intense pricing pressure and excess production that has plagued makers of disk drives and other memory storage components.

Most of the cuts would be in manufacturing operations in the Asia-Pacific region, with some being made in the United States and Europe, said Seagate spokesman Phil Montero.

Seagate has factories in Singapore, China, Malaysia and Thailand, and employs about 80,000 worldwide, Montero said.

A drive to streamline operations and improve its products meant Seagate needed a smaller, better-educated global workforce, it said.

‘‘The resources required for this 'factory of the future' include a smaller and much more technically skilled workforce than that which has traditionally been sought by disk drive manufacturers," Seagate said.

Workers would be phased out through natural attrition, voluntary departures and elimination of some jobs, the company said. Seagate expected to incur further charges ‘‘as necessary" as it further improved efficiency, it said without elaborating.

Earlier this month, Seagate said it would incur a $216 million charge as it revamped its software unit. Last year it cut 10,000 jobs worldwide.

Shares in Seagate fell $1.06 to $31.94 in composite trading on the New York Stock Exchange Tuesday. The job cuts were announced after the close of trade.

News Corp. Says Not In Talks With Ziff-Davis

Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. Ltd. denied Tuesday that it was involved with any talks to buy computer-trade magazine and on-line publisher Ziff-Davis Inc.

‘‘The persistence and volume of rumors that News Corp and Ziff-Davis are involved in discussions requires us to depart from our (no comment) policy and to deny that any such discussions have taken place or are scheduled to take place,’’ the company said in a statement.

The denial follows a report in Britain's Observer newspaper that News Corp., which owns most of the television and movie company Fox

Entertainment Group Inc. and dozens of newspapers around the world, was considering a Ziff-Davis deal that could be worth up to $1.5 billion.

A Ziff-Davis spokesman denied the report Monday.

Internet Taxes Fail to Catch Fire

House Republican leaders warned an Internet tax commission Tuesday that the GOP-led Congress is in no mood to expand taxes on electronic commerce, including sales taxes on purchases across state borders.

‘‘This idea is not a popular one in Congress or among the American people," wrote three dozen GOP lawmakers in a letter to the Advisory Commission on Electronic Commerce, which is holding its second of four meetings.

The 19-member panel of business and government officials was created by Congress last year to recommend future tax policy on Internet business and is supposed to finalize recommendations by April. That same law imposed a three-year moratorium on new Internet taxes.

The GOP letter, signed by House Majority Leader Dick Armey and Majority Whip Tom DeLay, both of Texas, said many Republicans were troubled by indications that the panel was examining ‘‘how to tax the Internet, rather than whether to tax the Internet."

The lawmakers urged the panel to focus on the international implications of U.S. tax decisions and on how American business might be affected by ‘‘complex and excessive state and local taxes on e-commerce."

‘‘You should also know that there are many members that will oppose any new taxes on the Internet," the GOP letter said. ‘‘An academic exercise on new ways to tax the Internet is not productive and does not reflect the intent of Congress in establishing the commission."

Such a position puts the House Republicans at odds with many state and local government officials, who fear growth in Internet commerce will siphon away sales tax and other revenue needed for schools, roads, fire protection and law enforcement.

‘‘If state and local governments lose billions, be assured county governments will have to incrase property taxes or income taxes to make up the difference - or cut esential community services," said Larry Naake, executive director of the National Association of Counties.

A major question for the commission, and ultiimately for Congress as well, is whether to devise a way for states and local governments to require collection of sales taxes on Internet purchases across state borders.

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that only Congress can force companies to collect and remit sales taxes unless the firm has ‘‘nexus" in that state - a store, a warehouse, or some other physical presence. This applies to catalog operations as well as Internet commerce.

Some proponents of sales tax reform say there are ways to develop software that would allow companies to collect sales taxes based on the destination of the goods purchased. Meanwhile, Sen. Ernest Hollings, D-S.C., has

introduced a bill in Congress to impose a 5 percent national sales tax on all remote sales, including Internet and catalog.

The commission also heard Tuesday from several telecommunications and business representatives who urged a recommendation that Congress repeal taxes on telephone service, including the 3 percent federal excise tax.

‘‘You’re taxing the very things that are driving growth," said Jeffrey Eisenach, president of the Washington-based Progress and Freedom Foundation.

U.S. Relaxes Encryption Export Limits

President Clinton Thursday relaxed U.S. controls on the export of data encryption technology, a step long sought by the U.S. computer industry and resisted by federal law enforcement officials.

The about-face came as lawmakers were weeks away from voting to overturn the White House’s strict export limits and just a day before Vice President Al Gore visited California seeking votes and campaign donations from the many high-tech firms there.

Once the realm of spies and generals, encryption has become an increasingly critical tool for securing electronic commerce and global communications over the Internet.

Until now, the White House had tilted its export policy toward the needs of law enforcement and national security agencies, which feared that strong encryption would be used by rogue nations and criminals to thwart U.S. surveillance.

But the high-technology industry, Internet users and privacy groups appear finally to have won the debate, arguing that the export rules were simply handing a vast, international market to non-U.S. companies.

The previous policy was also a hindrance for Gore in his 2000 Presidential bid. ‘‘This has been a big thorn in Al Gore’s paw for two years now and they were finally able to remove it," a leading Republican lobbyist said.

The new plan will allow U.S. companies to sell the most powerful encryption, used to keep everything from e-mail to cellular telephone conversations private, to customers in all but a handful of nations such as Iraq and Libya.

‘‘This is going to be a severe blow to national security interests and it is going to hurt law enforcement," said Stewart Baker, former general counsel to the National Security Agency, the U.S. intelligence agency charged with eavesdropping and codebreaking around the world.

But Baker, a lawyer representing high-tech companies, said the change was inevitable, given the growing availability of encryption from non-U.S. companies. ‘‘If they had delayed much longer, there was a real risk that large parts of the encryption technology would have moved off-shore irretrievably," he said.

Virginia Republican Rep. Bob Goodlatte authored a bill that was sponsored by more than half the members of the U.S. House of Representatives to gut

the existing export limits.

Goodlatte said he would reassess whether his legislation was still required, noting its similarity to the new White House policy. ‘‘You would have a hard time shining very much light between this proposal and the bill," he said.

Industry officials welcomed the change, which had been a major lobbying priority for years.

‘‘It speaks very highly to their ability to see the writing on the wall and do exactly what they needed to do," said Lauren Hall, chief technology officer for the Software and Information Industry Association.

The new rules largely abandon the case-by-case licensing approach that applied to all but the weakest encryption products.

The slow and cumbersome licensing process made it extremely difficult for U.S. companies such as Network Associates and RSA Security to sell their popular computer security products overseas.

And for makers of mass-market software, such as Microsoft Corp. and IBM Corp., the rules forced companies to weaken the security in Web browsers, e-mail programs and other products.

Under the new rules, exporters will have to report who bought their products, such as an overseas distributor, but not who the ultimate end-user was -- an impossible requirement for programs sold in retail stores to millions of customers.

The administration also asked Congress for $500 million to beef up government computer security and additional funds to help law enforcement agencies deal with encrypted criminal communications.

And the administration planned to ask Congress to pass a law establishing legal standards for when law enforcement agencies can force encryption users to crack open their encrypted data.

That could run afoul of civil liberties groups. Twice in the past few months privacy groups have sounded the alarm over White House proposals to enhance surveillance of ordinary computer users.

‘‘This opens a new and very important debate about the circumstances under which the government should have access to our most sensitive data," said Alan Davidson, staff counsel at the nonprofit Center for Democracy and Technology. ‘‘We remain concerned that the standards being put forward will not adequately protect privacy in cyberspace."

Developers Split On Proposed Web Language Standard

Efforts to craft a new language for building Web pages may stall because of rifts within the development community, which is debating a proposed standard.

Last month the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) proposed Extensible Hypertext Markup Language (XHTML), turning it over to the development community for a final review period, but since then the process has lost

some momentum. Developers have not been to agree on a naming convention that orients Web browsers to their tasks.

XHTML would rewrite Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), the Web's most commonly used language. The rewrite would make it easier for individual industries to design Web pages that meet their specific needs.

At stake is how browsers will make sense of the Web when it is written in a potentially infinite variety of individually tailored languages.

Web authors use HTML to design basic Web pages. HTML tags designate format and page elements such as paragraph breaks, color, tables, and lists. With XHTML, HTML would be rewritten in Extensible Markup Language (XML), a technology for creating Web languages.

XML defines a tagging structure for the creation of industry--or task-specific languages. One example is MathML, which creates Web pages with mathematical content and functions.

Some XML developers are complaining that the XHTML proposed recommendation is playing fast and loose with the use of namespaces. XML namespaces, which the W3C recommended in January, let Web browsers distinguish between tags from different XML-based languages. In other words, if a document had both MathML tags and tags from another language, the namespaces would tell the browser which tags belong to which language and how to interpret them.

The W3C's XHTML working group has proposed a trio of namespaces for XHTML. But the working group's critics think there should be only one.

In current implementations of XML, browsers refer to a file called a Document Type Definition, which defines grammar or syntax of a particular XML-based language. One W3C effort is underway to define XML schemas, which will give XML developers more power and flexibility in specifying how their tags are interpreted. The schemas' specification, which has not reached official recommendation status, is intended ultimately to replace the Document Type Definition.

The current controversy arises over the practice of using Web addresses, or URLs, as labels for separate namespaces. In other words, a Web document would use a URL to tell the browser what kind of XML it is reading and how to interpret its tags.

Though URLs traditionally point to a particular Web page, in the case of namespaces they only differentiate one namespace from another, much like a telephone number that doesn't connect to a phone line, but only provides a unique identifying number for a person or residence.

But the W3C working group devoted to the new XHTML standard thinks the namespace URL should not only function as a unique identifier, but also should steer the browser to a definition of how the language corresponding to that namespace works. The W3C working group wants the namespace URL to do double duty in identifying the namespace and pointing to a document that will tell the browser how to read the page.

Namespace purists oppose that move, in part because it will complicate the interpretation of pages written in XHTML.

"What the working group is doing is building a Tower of Babel by dividing up namespaces for a single language," said Don Park, president of XML software and consulting firm Docuverse. "Everyone knows what the paragraph

tag means, but according to the working group proposal a single program will have to identify three paragraph tags."

Working group members counter that the three namespaces within XHTML are necessary to delineate three varieties of HTML: strict, transitional, and frame-set.

Strict XHTML, the smallest namespace, excludes all presentational markup tags; those tags are to be included separately in style sheets. Transitional XHTML resembles HTML, which includes presentational markup elements. Frame-set XHTML includes rresentational markup as well as the use of frames, the common separate smaller panes within Web pages.

The debate over XHTML namespaces has dominated the discussion at the "xml-dev" newsgroup for XML developers.

"Namespaces are about unique identification; they are not about meaning..." wrote Sun Microsystems' Jon Bosak, chair of the W3C's XML coordination group. "The main argument for specifying three namespaces for XHTML rests on the assumption that there is a one-to-one association between namespaces and schemas. This is not true."

W3C representatives characterized the contentious debate over XHTML namespaces as a normal part of the W3C review process.

"This is all part of the process," said Ian Jacobs, editor of the XML specification. "There is not yet a consensus in the community. If there continues to be a huge disagreement, something may change."

XHTML's review period ends September 22. The W3C typically takes two weeks to review comment before deciding whether to officially recommend a proposal.

Millions Use Web for Floyd Updates

Millions of people are going onto the Internet for instant updates on Hurricane Floyd along with weather maps, travel advisories and survival tips.

Debora Wilson, president and chief executive of weather.com, said her site got 14.9 million visitors Monday, five times the normal traffic. She expected to break the record again Tuesday. The previous high was 12.6 million, when meteorologists tracked four hurricanes on Sept. 25, 1998.

''The Internet makes this information much more widely available in places where people would not be naturally able to receive television or cable services," she said. The site is affiliated with cable TV's Weather Channel.

At www.redcross.org, visitors can learn what causes hurricanes and how to prepare for one. The American Red Cross site offers guidelines for assembling a disaster supplies kit and protecting property.

Another site, promising up-to-the-minute photos from southern Florida beaches, ran into technical difficulties Tuesday. Yet another site updated flight cancellations throughout the day.

There’s also a site, www.4hurricanes.com, helping link visitors to other sites with weather and emergency information.

The weather.com site offers news dispatches, maps and forecasts. It also sets up chat rooms for visitors to message one another directly. Absent owners of beach houses can ask detailed questions about local conditions.

Consumers Sometimes Pay The Price For Free E-mail

When it comes to free Internet services, sometimes you get what you pay for.

Millions of Net users, particularly newer ones, are flocking to free Web-based email accounts and free dial-up Internet service providers. But a recent rash of outages, security snafus, postponed public stock offerings, and privacy blunders have raised questions about the quality of service consumers can expect when they get something for nothing.

Excite@Home’s free Web-based email service Excite Mail has suffered limited outages for the past two business days, the company confirmed Friday.

The company’s problems come on the heels of recent outages at Microsoft’s competing free Hotmail email service, as well as a major security breach that may have compromised Hotmail users’ privacy.

The troubles for free Net services don’t end there. For example, USA.net, a Web mail service and outsourced corporate email company, pulled its planned IPO in August.

Together, these shortcomings seem to constitute a worrying trend, leaving consumers to wonder if free services are worth it, or if young Internet industry can make good on its promises.

One explanation for the service problems: Free Net services often have trouble handling a high volume of usage, company executives and analysts say. Many times, free services--whether they are online or not--do not properly anticipate the level of demand they create, they said.

"You’re starting to see more and more people using these free services. The network infrastructures might not be able to deal with the demands that the customers are placing on the networks," according to Michele Pelino, an Internet analyst at The Yankee Group.

Increased publicity surrounding free personal computers, free ISPs, free cellular phones, and other pay-nothing technology equipment and services has contributed to the increased demand.

"There’s been a lot of press out there. Now people are taking them up on [free services]," Pelino said. "They better be ready for the demand that’s going to happen."

Of course, many customers are immensely satisfied with their free Net services. And, companies such as NetZero and AltaVista have made an impact on the ISP industry in relatively short order.

Customer service is often another weak spot for free service providers, analysts said, because the Internet’s so-called newbies often flock to free

services and bombard customer service departments with frequent inquiries.

But quality concerns aren't the only questions with free Web services. Free ISPs in particular are supported by tightly targeted advertising, and in return for the service users agree to give up demographic data and allow the ISP to track their movements online.

Analysts say this sharply limits the market, as many Web browsers are unwilling to give up that amount of privacy in order to save roughly $20 a month. A study circulated by AltaVista earlier this week bore this out, finding that about two out of five Web users would be willing to give up their privacy in exchange for free access.

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